

# Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

## Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. email	James Seaton to Joseph Sestak; re: Downing - Command Failures (6 pages)	09/18/1996	P5

### COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records  
NSC Emails  
MSMail-Record (Sept 94-Sept 97) ([Schwalier])  
OA/Box Number: 590000

### FOLDER TITLE:

[06/26/1996-12/12/1996]

Jimmie Purvis  
2006-0649-F  
jp1146

### RESTRICTION CODES

#### Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

#### Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

M S M a i l

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**DATE-TIME** 18 September 96 07:29  
**FROM** Seaton, James B.  
**CLASSIFICATION** UNCLASSIFIED  
**SUBJECT** Downing--Command Failures [UNCLASSIFIED]  
**TO** Sestak, Joseph A.  
**CARBON\_COPY** NO CC's on THIS MESSAGE  
**TEXT\_BODY**  
Thanks Joe. I hope to give this to Bob this morning. Semper Fi, Jim  
[[ DOWNING.DOC : 1818 in DOWNING.DOC ]]  
**ATTACHMENT  
FILE DATE** 18 September 96 7:28  
**ATTACHMENT  
FILE NAME** DOWNING.DOC

**SUBJECT:** Command Failures Leading Up To Khobar Towers Bombing

A review of the Downing report suggests that operational and organizational failures within the Central Command contributed to the June 25 Khobar Towers tragedy. It appears, however, that the Secretary of Defense does not intend to hold CINCCENT accountable for failures in the CINC's chain of command. This may be problematic, particularly in light of: (a) underway Air Force efforts to assign accountability within its Service (and General Fogleman's emphasis on accountability); (b) Central Command organizational confusion and split responsibilities vaguely reminiscent of the situation in Mogadishu prior to the October 3, 1993 Ranger raid; and (c) the enhanced authorities granted to CINCs by Goldwater-Nichols legislation  
-- authorities CINCCENT did not choose to exercise.

The Downing report summarizes leadership failures at different levels in the military chain of command. Of the report's 26 findings, one attributes command failures at levels above the Commander of the 4404th Wing; two specifically cite failures on

the part of the 4404th Wing Commander; two single out DoD; and five detail Central Command failures. The remaining findings cover a variety of subjects (e.g., intelligence, Air Force, State/DoD responsibilities, etc.). Not all failures are of the same degree or magnitude, but there are a variety of command and accountability breakdowns throughout the chain of command.

#### Command Accountability

On August 30, 1996, "without prior review," the Secretary of Defense transmitted the Downing report to the Secretary of the Air Force for evaluation and appropriate action. Secretary Perry deferred to the Secretary of the Air Force "on any issues regarding the adequacy of individual acts or omissions." In turn, the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff designated the 12th Air Force Commander as the disciplinary review authority and General Court-Martial Convening Authority regarding any actions or omissions by Air Force personnel associated with the Khobar Towers bombing.

In forwarding the report to the Secretary of the Air Force "without prior review," the Secretary of Defense essentially implies a failure in Air Force leadership and excludes the possibility of accountability or responsibility breakdowns within the chain of command leading downward from the Central Command Commander-in-Chief (CINCCENT) to the Service Component Commander(s). Furthermore, in a September 15, 1996 letter to the President, the Secretary of Defense essentially absolves CINCCENT of any omissions or direct failures by stating:

Regarding General Peay, I would note that I recommended him to you for the position of CINCCENT. Obviously, in light of the Khobar Towers event I have examined his performance in force protection and all his other responsibilities. After that review I wish to reaffirm my strong support. No one cares more about our troops than General Peay. He is one of our most experienced combat officers and I can think of no better commander to have in charge of the CENTCOM region at this

critical time.

#### Organizational Confusion

The Downing report concludes that, as a result of their ad hoc origins, the 4044th Wing (Provisional) and the Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA) do not possess the support infrastructure found in permanently established organizations.

The current organization and structure of the Wing and JTF-SWA are not suited for a long-term presence in Saudi Arabia, particularly under existing threat conditions.

Similarly, the Central Command component commanders retain operational control of forces supporting Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.

Operational control of involved Air Force units resides at Shaw Air

Force Base, SC -- 7,000 miles from Saudi Arabia. The Commander

JTF-SWA assumes tactical control of forces provided by Central Command components supporting SOUTHERN WATCH. (Tactical control is

normally limited to local control of movements or maneuvers necessary

for accomplishing assigned missions.) Thus, force protection responsibilities and tactical control were not in the same hands at

the time of the Khobar bombing.

Following the November 1995 OPM/SANG bombing, CINCCENT gave additional responsibilities to CJTF-SWA, for coordination of force

protection in Saudi Arabia. Prior to assuming command of JTF-SWA in

April 1996, Major General Kurt Anderson was not briefed by CINCCENT

on force protection issues. Without operational control of SOUTHERN

WATCH forces, General Anderson did not view his force protection

responsibilities as directive in nature. Following the June 1996

Khobar Towers attack, the CINC directed CJTF-SWA to assume full responsibility for force protection of all combatant forces deployed

in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.

Within the Central Command region, there was organizational

confusion regarding split responsibilities. This created a situation not totally unlike that in Somalia in the fall of 1993, when U.S. Special Operations Forces in Somalia, though supporting forces involved in the UN mission, reported to the Joint Special Operations Command, which in turn reported directly to CENTCOM. While the chain of command and organizational situation in Saudi Arabia did not in any way mirror that found in Somalia, there are still similarities, in that nearly three years after the Ranger raid, CENTCOM still had not established effective procedures to operationally control forces located in theater.

Unexercised Goldwater-Nichols Authorities  
The Goldwater-Nichols legislation expanded and strengthened the CINCs' authority over their service component commands and gave CINCs wide latitude and authority to organize assigned forces to accomplish their missions. [Note: Downing's report also noted that the Air Force Component Command was not organized or structured to execute its full responsibilities for the security of forces in Saudi Arabia and that for some critical functions AFCENT relied upon the Air Combat Command.] It appears CINCCENT did not fully exercise his authorities, and this likely contributed to the confused organizational structure and split responsibilities in the region. In a September 16 press conference, General Downing stated:

The Goldwater-Nichols legislation assigned great power to the unified combatant commanders. I believe the law's intent was to strengthen joint operational command while leaving the services the mission of training, equipping and sustaining the force. Force protection is an operational issue. There are training and equipping pieces to it, but ultimately it is an inherent function of command. Leaving two service components, the Air Force and the Army, in charge from a distant 7,000 miles away in the United States satisfies the letter of Goldwater-Nichols,

but it does not satisfy the spirit of the law.

In the absence of an in-theater headquarters, there is some logic to assigning service component commanders operational control over forces involved in military operations. In fact, the three large CENTCOM operations in the Gulf region are each assigned to component commanders: NAVCENT--maritime interdiction; AFCENT--Operation SOUTHERN WATCH; and ARCENT--preposition operations in Qatar and Kuwait. Still, this does not release the CINC from overall responsibility for direction, coordination and oversight. To some extent, it appears the CINC relinquished some of these responsibilities -- at least with regards to SOUTHERN WATCH.

#### Summary

The 1995 OPM/SANG bombing should have provided a wake-up call to CENTCOM. This does not appear to be the case, however, based on the findings of the Downing report. The clear sense of urgency, top-down guidance and command supervision commonly evidenced when any task or mission has the commander's attention -- when force protection is a command priority -- was absent at Khobar Towers. Thus, Secretary Perry's apparent recommendation to the President to relieve CINCCENT of any culpability in the pre-Khobar Towers situation may well prove problematic.

#### Select Command "Failures"

□ Finding 3: (CENTCOM) Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia and other U.S. Central Command units in the region were not structured and supported to sustain a long-term commitment that involved

expanded missions, to include increased force protection from an emerging and viable terrorist threat.

□ Finding 4: (CENTCOM) Current U.S. Central Command relationships do not contribute to enhanced security for forces operating in the region.

□ Finding 5: (CENTCOM) Force protection practices are inconsistent in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf region.

□ Finding 6: (CENTCOM) There is no theater-specific training guidance for individuals or units deploying to the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility.

□ Finding 14: (CENTCOM) While the communications architecture in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility supported the flow of intelligence throughout the upper echelons of the chain of command, field units had limited access due to classification restrictions.

□ Finding 19: (Chain of Command) The chain of command did not provide adequate guidance and support to the Commander, 4404th Wing (Provisional).

□ Finding 20: (BGen Schwalier) The Commander, 4404th Wing (Provisional) did not adequately protect his forces from a terrorist attack.

□ Finding 21: (BGen Schwalier) Funding for force protection requirements was not given a high priority by the 4404th Wing (Provisional).